

PSCI 3324 (16254) – U.S. PRESIDENCY, Spring 2008

Dr. Karen Hult

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Hours: T 2:30-4, Th 11-12:30, and by appt.

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Pundits and politicians, scholars and citizens have all at various times labeled the presidency imperial, imperiled, and impossible. Many argue that campaigns reveal little about candidates' capacity to govern: what it takes to be *elected* president is not what it takes to *be* president. Others counter that once in office, presidents remain in a “permanent campaign” – to seek reelection, to keep their approval levels high, to pursue policy goals in Congress. At the same time, some contend that contemporary presidents are overloaded – confronted with burgeoning responsibilities, intractable problems, an increasingly fragmented and fractious political system, and unreasonable public expectations. Others counter that presidents have become too closely linked to the mass public, perhaps increasing responsiveness but reducing institutional capacity for addressing complex, long-term problems. In contrast, other critics complain that presidents have grown out of touch with most U.S. citizens, while trying to weaken the checks of other branches of government.

This semester, we will explore many of these claims. We will do so by examining several aspects of the presidency: its constitutional and political underpinnings, the selection process, presidential policy-making, and presidential relationships with the public, with other branches of government, and with global leaders and groups. Although attention will be paid throughout to matters of current interest (such as the 2008 presidential election, President Bush's efforts to secure immigration reform, ongoing hostilities in Iraq and Afghanistan), the course is *not* simply about current events, and our purpose is *not* to praise or condemn any particular president. Rather, our primary purpose will be to trace, explain, and assess the evolution of the “modern presidency” and its consequences for presidential leadership and for governance – to seek to understand what the office has become and where it might be headed, in the context of U.S. politics as a whole.

Reading

The following books are available for purchase at the University and the Tech bookstores:

- Colin Campbell, Bert A. Rockman, & Andrew Rudalevige, Editors, *The George W. Bush Legacy* (CQ Press, 2007).
- Rhodes Cook, *Race for the Presidency 2008* (CQ Press, 2007).
- George Edwards & Stephen J. Wayne, *Presidential Leadership: Politics and Policy Making*, 7th edition (Thomson Wadsworth, 2006).

Selected articles also will be posted on Blackboard.

Course Requirements

This will be a lecture-discussion class. Although there will be elements of lecture in all class sessions other than the simulation, students are encouraged to contribute comments and questions at any time. The lectures will supplement the readings, but will not duplicate them. We will, however, discuss the readings, so it will be to an advantage to have done them prior to class. During the simulation, a small-group decision-making exercise, the instructor and teaching assistant will be mostly invisible.

Grades will be determined as follows:

Two simulation papers	30%
Analytical essay	15%
2 midterm exams	30%
Final exam	15%
Participation	10%

For the *simulation*, each student will be assigned a role in a candidate's campaign for his or her party's nomination for president; the focal races will be those on February 5, "Super Tuesday." As part of that exercise, each student will write two short papers. The first, which will be written and revised after the first group discussion, will examine the specific role to which each student is assigned. The second will describe the recommended actions and then analyze the actual results of the February 5th races and explain whether and why the actions and dynamics were similar to or different from those the student's group recommended.

Later in the semester, each student will be asked to write a 5-7 page *analytical essay* on a topic chosen from a provided list. The three *exams* will include multiple choice and short answer questions; the final exam will contain material from the midterm exams. Among the elements of *participation* are thoughtful and civil discussion in class, the posing of questions about course materials or related contemporary issues, respectful and attentive listening to the views of others, *and* regular, on-time class attendance.

Course grades will be based on *total* points; although final course grades may be curved, those receiving a 90% or higher are *guaranteed* some form of "A," those getting between 80% and 89% some form of "B," and so on. *All* coursework must be completed for students to pass the class.

Extra Credit: Up to 10 extra credit points (2% of the final course grade) will be given to students who attend an event (a campaign rally, debate, speech, or other activity) related to the 2008 presidential election or to policies related to the presidency and national executive. Students should write a two to three page essay that briefly summarizes the meeting or event, examines their reactions to it, and incorporates any relevant course materials or discusses why course materials did *not* apply. Extra credit essays are due *no later* than the last day of class, April 29th.

The **Virginia Tech Honor Code** will be in effect throughout the course. Any student with special needs or circumstances should feel free to meet with me to discuss their situation.

COURSE SCHEDULE AND READING ASSIGNMENTS

COURSE INTRODUCTION (Jan 15)

I. CONTEXT OF THE U.S. PRESIDENCY

A. Perceptions and Evaluations (Jan 17)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch 1
- Campbell, Rockman, & Rudalevige [CRR], ch. 1

B. Presidencies and Polarization (Jan 22)

- Campbell in CRR, ch. 2
- Fiorina in CRR, ch. 5

II. PRESIDENTIAL SELECTION

A. Nomination (Jan 24)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 2
- Cook, Preface, Introduction; scan rest of book for simulation, focusing on states with primaries or caucuses on February 5th

** Turn in first paper (using the Digital Drop Box) NO LATER than Jan 29, 9:30 a.m.

First Group Meeting (Jan 29)

B. General Election (Jan 31)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 3 Appendix D

** Turn in revised paper NO LATER than Feb 5, 9:30 a.m.

Second Group Meeting (Feb 5)

C. Debriefing and Selection Summary/Evaluation (Feb 7)

- Cook, pp. 150-169
- Edwards & Wayne, Appendix D

III. PRESIDENTIAL POWER: TO LEAD OR TO FOLLOW?

** Turn in second paper in class Feb 12th.

A. Presidents and Publics: The Public Relations Presidency? (Feb 12-14)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 4
- Jacobs & Shapiro in CRR, ch. 3
- Jacobson in CRR, ch. 4

** **EXAM I FEB 19th**

B. Channels of Power?: Media and Interest Groups (Feb 21)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 5
- Peterson in CRR, ch. 13

IV. PERSONALIZED PRESIDENCY (Feb 26-28)

- Edwards & Wayne ch. 8

"Spring" Break (Mar 4-6)

V. Governing

A. Inside the Executive

1. Presidential decision-making (Mar 11-13)

- Edwards & Wayne, chs. 6, 7
- Rudalevige in CRR, ch. 7

2. Presidents and the executive branch (Mar 18)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 9

3. Presidents and executive power: the unilateral presidency? (Mar 20)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 15
- Aberbach in CRR, ch. 6

**** EXAM II MAR 25th**

NO CLASS: Reading/Writing Day (March 27th)

B. Presidents and Congress (Apr 1-3)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 10
- Sinclair in CRR, ch. 8

C. Presidents and the Judiciary (Apr 8-10)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 11
- Yalof in CRR, ch. 9

VI. DRAWING THE PIECES TOGETHER: POLICY PERFORMANCE

A. Domestic Policy (Apr 15)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 12
- Foreman in CRR, ch. 12

B. Economic Policy and Budgeting (Apr 17)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 13

C. Foreign and National Security Policy (Apr 22-24)

- Edwards & Wayne, ch. 14
- Tanter & Kersting in CRR, ch. 10
- Campbell in CRR, ch. 11

VII. CONCLUSIONS (April 29)

- Rockman in CRR, ch. 14

FINAL EXAM Saturday, May 3, 10:05 noon